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Note verbale dated 31 May 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations has the honour to transmit a letter dated 30 May 2016 from Stéphane Dion, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, to the President of the Security Council (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Canada respectfully requests that the present letter and its annex be issued as a document of the Security Council and circulated to all members of the Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 31 May 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you, in your capacity as President of the Security Council, concerning the desperate situation of civilians in Iraq and Syria, who have suffered, and continue to suffer, unimaginable atrocities at the hands of so called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

We are alarmed by evidence that suggests that ISIL may have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Iraq and Syria. These atrocities must be investigated and a legal determination made by a competent court. The perpetrators of these crimes must be held to account.

Canada stands in solidarity with the victims of the crimes committed by ISIL. Among many horrific abuses is the deliberate targeting by ISIL of women and girls from religious and ethnic minorities for rape, sexual enslavement and forced marriage. We are equally outraged by acts of violence against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The impacts are devastating for the survivors as well as for their families and communities, and will endure long beyond the end of the conflict. ISIL is also deliberately targeting civilians in deadly bombing attacks. We strongly condemn the abuses committed by ISIL and its blatant disregard for the lives and well-being of civilians in Iraq and Syria.

In March 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report which concluded that there is evidence to suggest that ISIL may have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Iraq. The report called for an independent investigation and for the Security Council to consider referring the situation to the International Criminal Court. The Government of Canada agrees with the recommendations made in the report.

Recently, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, in a briefing, informed the Security Council that, so far, more than 50 mass graves have been discovered in areas of Iraq liberated from ISIL control. He called upon the international community to take steps to ensure the accountability of members of ISIL for the atrocious crimes perpetrated. In addition, the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Mohamed Ali Alhakim, urged the Council to set up a specific legal mechanism for investigating and bringing to justice the criminals of ISIL. It is certain that, without accountability, there will be no sustainable peace in Iraq and Syria.

We therefore ask the Security Council to act in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by establishing a mechanism for investigating reports of violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria, for determining whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes and for identifying the perpetrators of such violations and measures to ensure accountability for the crimes perpetrated by ISIL in Iraq and Syria, including a referral to the International Criminal Court, as appropriate.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council and circulated to all members of the Council.

(*Signed*) Stéphane **Dion**